

Vermont Domestic Export Program

Program Overview

Vermont's Domestic Export Program was created by the Legislature in 2014 "to connect Vermont producers with brokers, buyers, and distributors in other U.S. state and regional markets, and to provide technical and marketing assistance to Vermont producers to convert these connections into increased sales and sustainable commercial relationships." The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF) in partnership with the Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM) and the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) accomplishes this through trade show assistance grants, matchmaker events, direct sales opportunities, and a comprehensive communications strategy. VAAF and other public and non-profit partners will provide technical assistance and education to Vermont businesses in order to build skills that will create productive business relationships. The Program is designed to complement the marketing and promotions work of producer associations (e.g. Specialty Food Association, Maple Sugar Makers' Association, Cheese Council, and Wood Manufacturers' Association).

Wholesale Market Entry

The grant application period for **matching trade show assistance grants** of up to \$2,000 per company was open from January 8 to February 6, 2015. \$25,500 was awarded in early March to 25 Vermont Food and Forest businesses, providing them with financial assistance to attend out-of-state trade shows. In addition, grantees will be offered technical assistance to enable them to maximize their trade show experience. [See page 4 for grant awardees].

In March 2015 VAAF co-hosted a **Statewide Matchmaker** event with the Vermont Specialty Food Association and Vermont Fresh Network that brought 30 regional buyers to the state. These buyers connected with over 50 Vermont businesses comprised of cheese makers, maple sugar makers, produce farmers, meat producers, and other specialty food businesses.

Additionally, VAAF will continue to collaborate with the Vermont Specialty Food Association and the CMO to host a **Vermont Pavilion at the Summer Fancy Food Show** in New York City in June. This will be the third year of this promotion, which includes bringing a Vermont chef to demo the products of businesses exhibiting at the show. Vermont exhibitors have stated that the promotion is successful in building Vermont brand recognition and promotes buyer-seller introductions. In 2014, 14 Vermont businesses exhibited under the Vermont pavilion with an additional 14 businesses exhibiting throughout the trade show floor.

Direct Sales & Promotional Opportunities

VAAF continues its work connecting Vermont food and forest products businesses directly to end consumers in the **Vermont Building at the Eastern States Exposition (Big E)**. In 2014, 25 Vermont businesses made more than \$1.7 million in gross sales over the 17 day fair.

VAAF is also pursuing a partnership with VDTM and the CMO to secure space for a Vermont sourced retail stand at the indoor **Boston Public Market**, which anticipates a grand opening in July 2015. This is an exciting opportunity to showcase Vermont produce, maple and dairy products along with specialty food, and wood

products in a high-visibility Boston market. VAAFM will also provide support to Vermont agriculture and wood products associations for **in-store demos** at urban markets in the Northeast region during the summer of 2015.

Communications

The program aims to **increase regional and national awareness of Vermont brands** by collaborating with the seasonal marketing campaigns performed by VDTM. We are exploring the creation of an online reporting portal to facilitate Agency collection of business updates and popular storylines to promote to out-of-state press and social media outlets.

Technical Assistance

VAAFM is working with the Farm and Forest Viability Program and other service providers to ensure access to high quality technical assistance for sales and marketing. We are also partnering with the Vermont Specialty Food Association, the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers and other producer associations to prepare businesses for out-of-state competition and to leverage buyer connections. Examples of assistance to be offered include turning leads into sales, e-commerce and online sales. Furthermore, the Agency is working closely with the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to develop a well-organized online resource for technical assistance.

Program Budget

Wholesale Market Entry	
Tradeshaw Grants	\$ 25,000
Summer Fancy Food Show	\$ 5,000
Direct Sales & Promotions	
Boston Public Market	\$ 10,000
Producer Association Micro-Grants	\$ 5,000
Advertising & Promotion	\$ 2,000
Technical Assistance	
Webinar & Workshops	\$ 1,000
Administrative	
Travel	\$ 2,000
TOTAL	\$ 50,000

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Trade Show Assistance Grant Overview

Vermont food and forestry businesses that are at different stages of growth with varying levels of trade show experience applied for grants that provide financial assistance to exhibit and sell their Vermont products at National trade shows. By offering matching grants, businesses can mitigate the financial risks associated with presenting at national trade shows.

Applicants completed an online application that requested they self-identify trade show experience and were evaluated on the following criteria

- **Economic Impact to Vermont** – Application should demonstrate the applicant’s economic impact to Vermont. The economic impact can be through increased sales, increased utilization of Vermont agricultural or forest product inputs, employment retention and/or addition or other identified value.
- **Marketing Strategy** – Applicants should offer reasons why the proposed trade show is consistent with their marketing plan and growth strategy.
- **Sales Approach** – The Applicant provides a comprehensive sales approach that focuses on writing orders while at the show.
- **Potential for Success** – Applicant’s goals should reflect careful consideration and realistic expectations for the trade show and should be specific, measurable, and attainable with deadlines for achieving objectives.
- **Budget** – The company has completed the budget form with realistic estimates

A total of 34 applications were received for a total request of \$45,916. 24 grantees were selected to receive \$25,500 in grant funds, leveraging an additional \$93,000 in private investment. Grant recipients will attend 15 different trade shows in 10 different states. Selections were made by a review committee consisting of state agency staff and representatives of the forestry, specialty food and dairy sectors. A list of the trade show assistance grant awardees can be viewed on the following page.

Trade Show Assistance Grant Awardees

Company	Trade Show & Location	Grant Amount
Artesano	New England Food Show in Boston, MA	\$500
Black River Meats	New England Food Show in Boston, MA	\$1,500
Brookside Woodworking	Fine Furnishing Show in Pawtucket, RI	\$905
Cobb Hill Frozen Yogurt & Cheese	New England Made Giftware & Specialty Food Show in Portland, ME	\$992.50
Consider Bardwell	American Cheese Society Meet the Cheesemaker Event in Providence, RI	\$500
Gringo Jacks	Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, NY	\$575
Halladays Harvest Barn	New England Made Giftware & Specialty Food Show in Portland, ME	\$487.50
Maple Landmark	Museum Store Association Conference & Expo in Hartford, CT	\$1,278
Mt. Mansfield Creamery	American Cheese Society Meet the Cheesemaker Event in Providence, RI	\$500
Nitty Gritty Grain	Associated Buyers Table Top Show in Portsmouth, NH	\$850
Parish Hill Creamery	American Cheese Society Meet the Cheesemaker Event in Providence, RI	\$500
Plymouth Artisan Cheese	Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco, CA	\$800
Rockledge Farm Woodworks	New England Made Giftware & Specialty Food Show in Portland, ME	\$1,405
Sugar Bobs Finest	Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, NY	\$500
The American Game Table Co.	American Camp Association New England Conference & Expo	\$500
The Potlicker	Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, NY	\$2,000

Company	Trade Show & Location	Grant Amount
Tonewood	NY NOW Gift Show in New York, NY	\$2,000
Vermont Chevron	Boston Local Food Trade Show in Boston, MA	\$765
Vermont Farm Table	International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York, NY	\$1,500
Vermont Farmstead Cheese	American Cheese Society Meet the Cheesemaker Event in Providence, RI	\$500
Vermont Hardwoods	Décor Expo in Atlanta, GA	\$2,000
Vermont Hay Co.	Natural Products Expo East Show in Baltimore, MD	\$2,000
Vermont Natural Coatings	ACE Hardware Fall Market Show in Chicago, IL	\$2,000
Wheeler Sugarworks	Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, NY	\$500